# THE REALITY OF UNITY OF RELIGIONS

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

# FOREWORD

Allah, the Exalted Lord, created human beings and t the same time made provision for the material and piritual needs of mankind. On this account, it was tated that on the one hand "the universe has been ubjugated to benefit mankind" and, on the other, it vas asserted that the jinns and human beings have ›een brought into existence with the sole objective that hey should worship and serve Him only. The former :xplicates that man can harness the forces of nature for ıis material advancement and the latter elucidates the 'act that his abiding and sincere relationship with his Creator holds the key to the satiation of his spiritual ıeeds. A close observation of the universe and the ;tudy of human history lays bare the fact that in every epoch these two basic needs have been fully taken care ɔf by Allah, the Exalted Lord. It has never happened hat the world was emptied of all the material esources needed by man. Likewise, it never so ɔccurred that there was ever any disruption in the task ɔf ministering to the spiritual needs of man. The whole world surrounding us is a witness to the process of fulfilling material needs. Similarly, Allah has made excellent arrangements to satisfy the spiritual needs through the medium of His Messengers and His

Books. There is a long line of Prophets an Messengers from Adam (unto him be peace) t Muhammad (unto him be Allah's blessings and peace) In every era, whenever mankind abandoned Allah' path and struck off across other paths, the doctrine o submission to Allah was inculcated through th Prophets and people were guided towards the divin path of peace and tranquillity that the soul yearns for.

25 Rabi-us-Sani, 1436 A.H
15 February, 2015

**Naseem Ahmed Ghazi Falah**
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New Delh

# INTRODUCTION

Our country is multi-religious. Different religious ɔmmunities survive and thrive here. For centuries Iuslims have mingled with other communities and ved next to each other in peace and tranquility. There re very few habitations where Muslims and non-Iuslims do not live together.

According to the Qur'ān, the instruction and uidance that Allah arranged to impart to mankind ince the advent of humanity was-Islam. To ommunicate it to His servants Allah arranged a chain f Prophets. Adam (unto him be peace) was at once a uman being and a prophet. Messengers and Prophets ontinued to arrive one after another at regular ntervals, until 1450 years ago the last Prophet Iuhammad (Allah's blessings and peace be unto him) vas sent to Arabia and the last Book of guidance, the )ur'ān, was bestowed upon him. Undoubtedly our :ountry must have been blessed with Prophets and Iessengers too or, at least, their teachings would have :omehow reached our country too. Thus, it becomes :lear that most other religions are not found in their ɔristine purity which Allah bestowed upon them.

The target group for this book is the non-Muslim ɨraternity of our homeland. The aim is to make them ɨware of the truth with regard to the unity of religions ɨnd, at the same time, to introduce them to the ɨuthentic version of Islam. An additional advantage is ɨhat the missionaries of Islam will get to know and

understand what implications the unity of religions h and this understanding will enable them to enlighte the non-Muslim brethren of our homeland wh actually this problem is.

It is hoped that the readers will derive maximu benefit from this book. Scholars are requested to off suggestions for the improvement of this book. I a grateful to the following eminent personalities wh took interest in the preparation of this project – D Muhammad Raziul Islam Nadwi, Secretary, Tasnee Academy; Moulana Naseem Ahmed Ghazi Falah Secretary Islami Sahitya Trust Delhi, Dr Muhamma Rafat, (now former) Secretary, Dept. of Tarbiya Jamaat-e-Islami, Hind; and, Moulana Abdul Hafee Rahmani of Vellore, North Arcot, Tamil Nadu. Ma Allah reward them handsomely. Amen.

I seek Allah's help in fulfilling the purpose fo which this book was written and hope people benefi by this book with its reach becoming widespread an universal. (Amen).

New Delhi, 25
1 March 2015
9, Jamadi-ul-oola, 1436 A.H.

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Secretar
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*ıapter I*

# The Reality of the Unity of Religions

In a discourse on religions, it is customary to say at all religions are equally true & it is not possible r a single religion to have a monopoly on Truth hile the rest of the religions are not based on Truth. It also said that different religions have different ımes but they lead to the same destination. It will en naturally follow that man can choose any one of e paths, and yet he will reach the destination. When l religions are true, then it is not proper to brand one ligion as true and exclude other religions by :anding them as not true. An individual professing ıe religion can continue to do so but he should let ıother individual to enjoy the right to follow a :ligion of his choice and he should acknowledge that ıe other individual's religion is equally infallible and ıould accept that those who profess other religions ıually deserve salvation. Therefore, to insist that one articular religion is true and to invite others to ınbrace that religion will result in disunity and ıarchy in society. National solidarity will be rent sunder. Religious hatred will spread. People will be ɔrn apart from one another.

It appears that people holding such an opinion ave not pondered over religions with the required ɔbriety and insight. It is apparent that this opinion is

shallow and superficial. No doubt, one should conced that there should be no violence and conflict simpl because of religious differences. Religious peopl should treat one another with respect, affectior sympathy and brotherly feelings. It is surpassingly tru that, in a plural society consisting of people with multi religious affiliations, religious confrontation, hostilit and tension would spell doom. And so, tolerance an fraternal feelings must be fostered among them.

Now, the question is: to achieve these ends, is i necessary for an individual to embrace the theory o the Unity of all religions, even after he arrives at th conclusion that not all religions are true. He reache such a conclusion only after intellectual assessment logical evaluation, knowledge-based analysis, anc intuitive insight? Is it then not necessary to accept the truth, whatever it be, which emerges after rising above all biases and prejudices, and after a dispassionate comparative study of religions?

In this discussion, one aspect should be given due importance. The attempt to find Truth among the religions should not be made with the aim to treat one religion as superior and more distinguished and to scorn other religions. Instead, the purpose should be to ascertain, in a spirit of true respect for all religions, whether the truth of each religion is unblemished or whether there is one religion whose truth has remained completely unaffected?

If the truth of one religion is established on the basis of supporting argument, intellect and insight, then the need for worldly success and salvation in the hereafter warrants that man should embrace that religion and regulate his life in accordance with it.

In order to promote cordial relations, fraternal ɛelings, and communal harmony among the followers f different religions, the following conditions are ıdispensable:

- Every human being should have the freedom to choose a belief-system and religion and there should be no coercion of any kind in this matter.
- There should be no discrimination against and injustice to any individual on the basis of religion.
- There should be fraternal feelings towards and tolerance for the followers of other religions as well as for one's co-religionists.
- There should be respect for the highest officials and celebrities of other religions, for their Scriptures and Holy Books, and for their places of worship.

## . FACTS WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION:

Are all religions infallible? Or, did the Creator ɡrant only one religion for man's guidance at the ɔeginning of human history? This is a fundamental ɹuery. It is not merely an academic or philosophical ɹuery. It has a bearing on every man's worldly success ınd on his salvation in the hereafter. Religion is the nost basic and significant necessity of man. Allah Himself has ministered to the basic needs of man like ıir, water, light, ınd the fertility of soil for food ɔroduction. There can never be a better or alternative ıdministration. When Allah did not allow others or ɛven human beings to supply these needs, and He ʂupplied them Himself, then would He not have

catered for the biggest and most important need of man, i.e. guidance? Has He delegated the task of guidance to man or a group of men? Is man in a position to propound a religion for one's own self or for other human beings?

Let us conjecture a situation in which a man sets aside the God-gifted religion and he leads his whole life in accordance with his chosen religion or the religion of his predecessors. Then, after his death, he comes to know that he had deprived himself of the gift of God's guidance in this worldly life and, as a consequence of non-compliance, he has run the risk of failure and frustration and of earning the fire and fury of hell. Then, what will he do? This is not just a problem of emotional and practical attachment to one's ancestral religion. Instead, this is a problem of securing an impression that one has been blessed with an invaluable and precious gift in this life, and of an impression of spiritual progress and success on the path of Truth and of obtaining eternal salvation in the hereafter. It is a very serious and delicate responsibility of every individual that he should not remain content with the duty of following one's preferences and sticking to one's prejudices and embracing someone's religion out of one's attachment to ancestors. Instead, he should be on the lookout for the True Religion revealed by God and, after discovering it, he should enter its fold freely and voluntarily.

Man has the time now to ponder over and to decide for his welfare. He can decide too to make sacrifices to uphold the Truth and to bear temporary privation of worldly comforts and luxuries when called upon to do so. However, when death comes and he

opens his eyes in the other world, he will have no opportunity whatsoever to ponder there and to come to a decision. One gets only one chance to live. Therefore, the present moment is the most precious and opportune moment one has to think and decide correctly. To let go of this opportunity is quite ruinous to one's self.

While inviting the readers to delve deep into the matter, I wish to state that this book is in essence an objective and comparative study of religions in order to find out how they deal with the fundamental problems, and what solutions they offer pertaining to human existence. It is by no means an attempt to denigrate or cast aspersions on any religion in any matter. This writer has genuine regard for all religions. A religion holds the view that it has the monopoly of Truth. Now, one should examine this claim with the tools of knowledge, intellect, evidence, insight and impartiality. It is very necessary for every individual to accept the Truth from our Lord if he desires prosperity and salvation. This is the most appropriate behaviour in the light of rationality and insight. This should not be seen as a problem pertaining to the superiority or inferiority of a religion.

## ii. DEFINITION OF RELIGION:

The proponents of the equal validity of all religions have defined religion as follows:

- Religion is a spiritual experience of an individual.
- Religion is a search for Truth.
- Religion is an endeavour to secure Supreme Reality, Eternal Truth or Ultimate Reality.

Some attempts to define religion seem to aim a excluding the concept of God, the process of revelatio and the medium of Prophethood through which God' message has been historically conveyed.

The question is: Is it possible to secure perfec guidance and instruction for life without God's guidance? Is it possible to forge beliefs, forms o worship, morals and a system of life through the afore mentioned definitions? One needs to ask, who will dc all this, setting God aside? Different spiritua experiences of different people, and different efforts tc seek the Truth can but lead to different results. Wha standard will be adopted to discriminate between true and false elements in these results? What criterion do we have in whose light we may determine infallibly that a particular thing is true and should be followed implicitly? It is a fact that there are varied differences and contradictions in the spiritual experiments that many individuals underwent. Should all these contradictions be simultaneously treated as correct and acceptable? To formulate belief, method of worship, and principles, rules and regulations in an impeccable manner for human existence is impossible. History shows that attempts in this direction were made only to end in failures invariably. The greatest proof is that man has invented innumerable ways of thought and action for his welfare, success, and salvation.

These technical terms project a certain concept of religion and the observation of the lives of the followers of such a concept lead to the following conclusions:

Religion is the name given to the observance of the remembrance of God, rituals of worship and moral

:ecepts in a limited area of personal life. In the vast :ea of an individual's life and collective existence 'here the need of God, His teachings and guidance are irely needed, God's guidance is conspicuously absent nd nowhere to be seen. In such significant areas, there ; a rebellion against God's guidance and teachings, 'hereas man-made ideologies and philosophies hold way over individual and social life. Of what use are eligion and God when their utility and relevance are o severely restricted? This is the secularism-oriented :oncept of God. Under the aegis of such a concept, God is acknowledged but in a very vast area of practical life He is ignored and disobeyed. As a :onsequence, man is caught in a vortex of :ontradiction and hypocrisy and is bearing severe losses in every walk of life. How is it possible for God to remain God for purposes of ritual worship and then to cease to be God in the versions of individual and collective life or how is it possible for man to cease to be God's servant and remain independent of God in his economic and political aspects of life, for example.

## iii. A FEW SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS:

1. Has God Himself said that man should resort to spiritual experiments or live his life in search of Eternal Truth, Supreme Reality, or Ultimate Reality? Will the result of his search be described as religion and will that religion be officially recognised by God? Has God ever expressed His inability and helplessness in the matter of granting a religion to man?
2. The first man on earth was Adam (unto him be peace). His wife, Eve, was with him. Followers

of great world religions accept this fact. D
Adam (unto him be peace) make his ov
religion or was he sent to the earth with t
God-given guidance and instruction? Was th
guidance meant for him (Adam) only or was
the first version of God-granted religion for h
children?

3. Has God made it clear that He has given man
different religions to mankind and, in spite c
basic differences and tremendou
contradictions, these religions are at onc
infallible? Has He also informed us that in Hi
eyes, no one particular religion among other
can ever take the position that it alone has th
Truth, veracity and infallibility?
4. Whose responsibility is it to shape a religion? I
man can found a religion, then where does th
need for God arise! Some religions do no
postulate God. Can a religion deserve to b
called a religion without the concept of God
Who has ordained that it is the responsibility o
man to found a religion for himself?
5. It is recorded in human history that there
appeared men of righteousness, of truth and of
impeccable character at different times and in
different nations. They declared themselves to
be the Warners (*Nabis*), Messengers
(*Paighambers*) and spokesmen of God. They
offered clear and unambiguous teachings about
God, His personality and attributes, life after
death, Paradise and hell, worldly success and
salvation for man. They made it clear too that
they were not offering their own teachings and

that all their teachings were from God. They were model teachers because they practised what they preached. They appeared continually in different nations and at different times. The last link in the chain of Prophets was Prophet Muhammad (Allah's blessings and peace be unto him) who appeared in the Arabian Peninsula about 1450 years ago. He is Allah's last Prophet. Surprisingly their teachings and precepts contain no adversarial and mutually contradictory elements in spite of differences in region and era and language. They had no axe to grind. They espoused unselfishly the cause of human welfare and emancipation from divine ire. An archangel passed on to them God's message and guidance in the form of revelation or truth from God in words, as the Messengers claimed.

6. God is most Merciful, most Compassionate, and loves human beings. (Qur'ān, 2:143) He has granted an exalted position to man in His scheme of creation. (17:70) He has allowed man to harness the forces of nature for his own advancement. Almost all material needs of man, big or small, have been ministered to with utmost skill, and with utmost attention to the minutest details and has been doing so ever and anon. Guidance is the most primary and basic need of man. The question to ponder is: Has the Compassionate Lord, who fulfilled all other needs of man, been negligent towards the basic need of man?

## iv.CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE RELIGION:

While seeking out the true religion in the midst of several religions, the following characteristics have to be borne in mind.

- The true religion must originate from God. That religion itself should advance that claim. In its source book or books, it should be clearly stated that God has revealed the religion and that it is not man-made. On that account, it could be asserted beyond a shadow of doubt that the religion of divine origin can by no means be ascribed to a human being. If a religion is ascribed, rightly or wrongly, to a human being or its founder is a human being, then it naturally follows that God is not the Founder of that religion.
- After the advancement of the claim of divine origin by a book, the supporting evidence can be subjected to strictest scrutiny before arriving at a conclusion. If the claim that the book is from God is substantiated and still man rejects it, he indirectly rejects God too, and embraces a horrible tragedy for himself.
- That religion should not go against the grain of human nature and rationality and common sense. That religion should be in sync with nature and should be successfully measured by the yardstick of intellect and logic. Its fundamental principles should not have undergone any alteration and should have remained uniform in every epoch and for every human group. Its teachings should not be unnatural, irrational and illogical, like the

teachings that there are two and more than two gods, or that God has begotten children, or that God grew tired and took rest or that He resorted to wrestling, etc. That religion should not be out and out an anthology of mythological stories. That religion's teachings and guidance should be relevant and applicable to the present day human existence and its problems and should be eminently feasible. That religion should not be a mere collection of rituals and ancestral traditions.

- The primary sources of that religion – the Book and the Person who brings the Book – should be authentic and protected against emendations and fabrications. There should have been no controversy over the historicity of both. There should be no doubt that what they state is mere fiction or has some tenuous link with fact. The message of the religion and its teachings should have been recorded and preserved during the lifetime of the presenter of the message. If the Book, the Teachings and the Message are all compiled centuries after the death of the Messenger on the basis of oral traditions, and as a consequence, innumerable basic or partial differences have emerged, then the matter in its entirety becomes dubious and unreliable.
- Religion should not be reduced to a private relationship between God and man. The role of God, at present, is confined to a narrow area of personal life wherein He is remembered and worshipped. God is kept away from a vast area of human existence. This is what man is doing

today. He has gone astray under the influence of various ideologies and philosophies and man made religions. As a result, man yearns for peace, security, contentment, spiritual tranquillity, justice, growth and progress, and material prosperity. These lofty ideals and precious blessings have become a mirage for him.

Today, human life is more or less a bane. Can God be God if He is just believed by people and remembered for a little while in places of worship and then He ceases to be of any use? What a terrible contradiction is it to say, "Acknowledge God but do not follow any instruction of His in your life. Act according to your wish. It should be man's pleasure to regulate his life in accordance with the philosophies ideologies and religions propounded by men!" In this way, man is assured by Satan that he has done his duty by believing in God but, for all intents and purposes Satan has turned man into a rebel against God in his whole life.

The constituents of a true religion should not be confined to belief, method of worship and moral precepts; a true religion takes the holistic view of life and provides basic guidance and commandments for the whole life. Only then life can be led in total surrender to God. The goal of human existence is nothing but glorification of God; the whole life should be a saga of dedicated service and obedience to God.

- Religion should have the competence to solve problems of life. Precedents of this competence should have been historically recorded. Its basic teachings and doctrines should have contributed

to the growth and development of an individual, and the reconstruction of family and society and this contribution should have been preserved and recorded authentically in history. The teachings should be purely matters of principle and practice, and should not abstain from the challenges of life and should grapple with them in a principled manner. Monasticism should not be a part of that religion. The ideal version of religion should not be devoid of the rights of a wife, children and familial relationships. Instead, it should acknowledge their rights and it should insist that God is pleased when the responsibilities towards them are carried out.

- That religion should strike a fine balance between the individual and the society; the individual should not be given priority at the expense of the society and vice versa; both the individual and the society should derive mutual benefit from their interaction; the growth and development of the individual should be impossible without the society.
- That religion should not promote priests and clerics as intermediaries between God and man. Man should have direct access to God. No religious divine should be so important that, without him, access to God becomes impossible.
- The religious teachings should have universal application. They should not address people on the basis of regional, national, linguistic, and racial consideration, but should address them as a whole. There should be no gender

discrimination but take into consideration on the natural difference between the sexes.

- In the true religion, and in its Books particular, and in the biographies of its emine personalities, there should be no obscer anecdotes. Stories of incest and adultery, and sexual perversity and deviation, should not fir a place in them.
- Difference and contradiction should not t found in them. Uncompromising harmon should blend the Book, the character of i celebrities and their teachings. All these shoul unite and integrate with each other to uphol their one ideal message from beginning to end.
- That religion should view humanity as on fraternity, undivided by birth, colour, race region and language. By exploiting suc divisions, it should not fan the flames of hatred violence and anarchy.
- That religion should adopt one standard o justice for all. Every form of discriminatio between the master and the labourer, betwee the strong and the weak, and between the affluent and the indigent should be strictly eschewed.

*(Source: Hindi Translation of the Qur'ān, Translator: Moulana Muhammad Farooq Khan)*

## v. RELIGIONS AND THEIR COMMON FEATURES:

Though religions have mutually contradictory elements and contain extremely important differences which cannot be overlooked, it is indeed a fact that

they have something in common too, particularly in matters like the concept of God, moral teachings and some values. Keeping this common aspect among religions, people in general hold this superficial view that all religions are true. There is a need to apply our minds to such a view in all earnestness. Even though the concept of God is a common factor in all religions, a study in depth brings out details which run counter to one another and are dissimilar and even quite different and mutually conflicting. There are some religions in which belief in God is neither accepted nor required. Can such diverse beliefs be at once correct and true?

The moral precepts and values which are shared commonly by religions do not substantiate the theory of the Unity of religions, because their motivating factors are varied and the consequences of non-compliance differ from religion to religion. Morality is a highly important part of life but a part cannot be a substitute for the whole. As regards moral teachings and shared values, the situation is no different. A deeper analysis of these inter-religious teachings and values brings out their inherent differences.

A powerful motive is required to practise moral teachings and uphold values. We should be aware that non-conformity will oblige us to face inquiry, suffer the possibility of being caught and be under the grip of fear before the Omnipotent Lord. Otherwise, moral precepts and values will adorn the books or will be the soul of sermons but we will not catch their glimpse or find their traces in active life.

The presence of common factors in all religions is indicative of an extremely important fact. At the advent of humanity, there was only one religion,

Owing to various reasons, from this one religion, other religions branched out as time passed.

If we study a few religions and their history, we realise that, as a result of rebellion and reaction against the weaknesses of the prevailing religion or the oppression practised by its votaries, other religions were founded. It is said that Buddhism emerged as a reaction to Hinduism.

One overarching truth is that the personalities and teachings of the founders of many religions have faded away in the long march of history. What are the genuine facts about them? It is well-nigh impossible to ascertain as things stand today.

The one most reliable source to get information about the basic teachings, commandments and instructions of various religions are religious books and the lives and character of their founders. (With the exception of Islam), when we examine the sources, nothing but frustration results, because the books were not compiled during the life-times of the founders. Centuries after their departure, attempts at compilation were made on the basis of recollection. Consequently differences emerged and sects were formed. Until the books were written, traditions were orally passed on. Now, how can it be asserted with certainty that the message of the founder and his teachings were recorded by his disciples and followers without any alteration, change, omission and addition?

The same state of affairs obtains with regard to the founders of religions, their lives and their conduct in their lifetimes. More often than not, grateful imagination and appreciation colour the facts and events, devotion and belief. It is not for nothing that

ome researchers and experts have expressed eservations over the historicity of the founders, and ut them in the pre-historic category.

## vi. THE FIRST RELIGION OF MANKIND:

How can we ever imagine that the human species had no religion at all at the initial stage of their history, or that they had several religions? God created several species and then man. He taught the birds how to fly and the fish how to swim. Did He not prescribe a goal for human existence and teach man to follow the Way of His choice and pleasure? Every created object in the universe is in service of man and man is a precious asset and instrument of God. When such is the case, how can then God treat man as though he were less significant than birds and fish by not prescribing rules and regulations for him and, instead of guiding him, did He let him wander and go astray? God alone decides the purpose of every created object in the universe. Similarly, God decides the purpose for which He has created man and made him sublime, superior to and more distinguished than most of His creation. It is God's duty to make man aware of the purpose of his life, and He discharged His duty and informed man about the goal of his life and gave him clear and detailed instructions with regard to the achievement of his goal. The strategy He adopted to fulfil His duty is known as *Risalat*. Time and again He selected a human being and sent an angel to him with a message containing His Will and ordered the selected human being (read, Prophet) to communicate His message in toto to target audiences.

Man is an intelligent manufacturer. Whenever he manufactures a machine, he issues a handbook/ manual spelling out how that machine should be used and other relevant instructions. Was God, who bestowed such intelligence on man, so unaware of His duties, that after creating man, He did not care to enlighten him on the purpose of his creation and did not arrange to guide and instruct him? God created man, but did not grant him the manual that he needs so much! Is it possible? In fact, God granted man not only the Sun, the Moon, air, water, jungles, mountains, rivers and oceans but also the fulfilment of the most serious need of man. He granted man knowledge of God, the awareness of the purpose of his life, the way to secure God's pleasure and to avoid His wrath. The greatest and most important need of man has been fulfilled by God in the finest manner possible.

The manual granted to man at the commencement of human journey constituted the first religion which was not man-made but God-granted and dealt with the following: knowledge about the One True God, a balanced development of worldly, materialistic and spiritual aspects of human existence, moral precepts, self-purification, observance of the human rights, salvation, the methodology to secure God's appreciation and pleasure, a system of guidance for life as a whole.

In this religion, guarantees for justice, peace and amity were given to both individual and society on the one hand and, on the other, teachings aiming at the elimination of oppression, injustice, exploitation of all kinds, corruption and anarchy formed an important part.

The characteristics of a true and divine religion mentioned earlier were all found in the first religion. To teach and inculcate this religion and to present a practical model, there was no need for God to descend to the earth (in the form of a human being, as the doctrine of *avatar* postulates). For all these purposes God selected in every epoch the pick of mankind and appointed him *Nabi* or Messenger. Many Warners and Messengers appeared among different nations. All of them taught the same religion and these eminent persons received scriptures from God.

In every epoch, there were people who accepted the message conveyed by the Prophets and followed their teachings. There were other people too who preferred to reject them, and to persistently and obstinately oppose them. Some exceeded their limits and went to the extent of tampering with the teachings of the Prophets according to their whims and fancies. Instead of accepting the truth and following it scrupulously, they added new beliefs and self-concocted teachings to the religion of truth. As a result, they went astray and were instrumental in misguiding others. Ill-treatment of common people and excesses on them came into vogue. As a reaction, new religions began to emerge. In the beginning God granted only one religion but men founded new religions by toying with and creating imbalances in the divine religion.

## vii. CAUSES OF CONFLICT AMONG THE FOLLOWERS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS:

The following excerpt written by a famous Islamic thinker, Dr. Abdul Haq Ansari, may throw light on the topic given above:

(In India, particularly) there are other reasons for differences and conflict between the followers of different religions:

The foremost and fundamental reason is that some of us and some groups are not at all willing to concede that Hindustan does not belong to the followers of one particular religion alone and that it belongs to all those who have been living here generation after generation for centuries and millennia but professing different religions. The people who define India as a mono-religious country claim to be the inheritors of the country and look upon the people who disagree with them as foreigners. They have laid down conditions which should be fulfilled before the so-called foreigners could be accepted as genuine Indians. The upshot of those conditions could be summed up thus: Accept our religious traditions as your religious traditions. Identify our religious icons as your religious icons. In other words, until the so-called foreigners believe in every item of their religion, the so-called foreigners have no right to claim that they are Hindustanis. In their view, patriotism and loyalty to the country are not enough as the criteria for citizenship. It is obvious that as long as this line of thinking dominates, it will militate against the establishment of amity-oriented atmosphere.

The second reason is the opinion of some people that when their religion is true, when their rituals are of

high respect, and when their traditions and leading figures deserve reverence, it warrants the super-imposition of their religion on others and they should be coerced to embrace their ways. If this is not possible, they cast aspersions on the beliefs, vandalise the places of worship and ridicule the eminent leaders of the so-called foreigners. The fallacy of non sequitur is exposed in their thinking. If I consider one opinion right and another wrong, then how does this entitle me to denigrate the wrong belief? If I think my ways to be superior and other ways to be defective, then how does it follow that I should compel others to toe my line? That individual or group who might resort to such a strategy will not only go against the spirit of humanism and democracy but also throttle the system of values of one's own religion.

The third reason is the common tendency among people to deny to others the rights they want for themselves. For example, we want safety for ourselves and our possessions. We want our social standing to remain untarnished. We want unhindered opportunities for education and career growth. Our people should get employment and occupy high posts. We should be allowed freedom to preach and spread our religion. We should educate our children on the lines of our religion. We should have the right to establish and run our religious and cultural institutions, and we should have all facilities to study, teach and popularise our mother tongue. But we are not at all ready to extend these rights to other religious groups. We strive to get more than what our legitimate rights warrant but it annoys us no end to grant the rights which are legitimately due to others. It never occurs to us that our

conduct is not only an example of gross injustice but also a sad commentary on our distortion of our finest traditions and highest values. This does not enhance the reputation of our religion; instead, it brings disrepute worldwide.

After enumerating three great causes of conflict and hostility among people of different religions, Dr. Abdul Haq Ansari offers a solution too.

1. We should look upon India as a country of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jains and Parsis and all other groups who have been residing and living here, generation after generation. We should sincerely and earnestly acknowledge that in our own country members of every religion and sect are entitled to equal rights.
2. One's religion, one's customs and rituals, one's values and traditions should not be imposed on others. There should be respect for the places of worship, religious leaders, religious books, traditions, festivals and ways of others.

   When we respect the religions, religious affairs and personalities of others, it does not mean that we treat our own religion with scepticism; it does not mean that we subscribe to the theory that all religions are homogeneous; it does not mean that we should not prefer one religion to another; it does not mean that we cannot call a spade a spade. Every man has the right to think that his views are right and others' views are wrong but it does not behove him to treat the things of others with contempt and scorn.
3. We should readily concede that every man has the right and freedom to believe in any religion firmly

or to forsake one religion and embrace another. Remaining within the fold of moral decency and democratic restrictions, he should have full rights and freedom to express his views and concepts and make use of all resources like print media, press releases, and newspapers to give wide publicity to them, to publish books and establish a school or a madrasa.

4. Finally, we should not forget the human values of our own religion. We should look upon them as a fundamental and integral part of our religion and utilise them in inter-personal contacts without any religious or communal discrimination. Extending love and service to every human being should be our dharma and we should think that it is a heinous crime to offend and oppress any person. This should be clearly internalised by us that by causing trouble to anyone, depriving him of his legitimate rights, and ruining his life, property and honour, we neither advance our self-interest nor promote the cause of our religion and our country. Every step of ours against Truth and Justice is unacceptable from every aspect – humanitarian, moral, religious and spiritual, and is a formidable and huge roadblock on the way to salvation." (Source: *National Solidarity and Islam*, pp. 17-20)

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***Chapter II***

# A few Fundamental Concepts and Religions

In order to find out the truth about the Unity of religions, it is better to select a few fundamental concepts and see what different religions state about them. If the religions are unanimous about them, or if they have only trivial differences, then it can be safely concluded that all religions are equally true and valid. On the contrary, if different religions are found to have serious differences and contradict each other with regard to these fundamental concepts, then can the concept of the Unity of religions be still upheld? A detailed analysis of all the teachings of all religions will be too elaborate and so the attitudes of a few select religions will be scrutinised. A few fundamental concepts are enumerated below:

- God's Existence and the Concept of God
- Creation of the Universe
- A System of Guidance for Man (i.e., Religion or Deen)
- Life after Death (hereafter, heaven and hell)

These concepts are not merely the topics for intellectual and philosophical debates and discourses. They have a bearing upon the activities of the individual and the society, on the success or otherwise of the individual and on the quality of his after-life

**A) The Concept of God**

A concise digest of the basic teachings of different eligions on the concept of God is given below:

The discourse on the concept of God begins in Hinduism with one God but, later on, two more Gods ire added. In this way, three Gods – Brahma, Vishnu ind Mahesh – are given importance. Brahma is icknowledged as the Creator; Vishnu, as the Protector ind Administrator of the universe; and Siva, as the Destroyer. Later, the pantheon comprises 33 crore leities. So far as the Vedas are concerned, there is a mention of the existence of one God and His attributes.

There are two other branches of Hinduism – Mimamsa and Samkhya and they advance arguments refuting God's existence. Therefore, it may be said that in Hinduism there is no commonly agreed belief with regard to God whose acceptance is binding upon all its followers and whose rejection sends the rejecter out of its fold. There can be monotheist Hindus, polytheist Hindus and atheist Hindus.

As things stand, Hindu society comprises a large number of people who worship a variety of deities. Many members subscribe to pantheism. With reference to Hindu religion, it is said that, in its view, every particle of the earth is a deity. In Vedanta Advaita, God alone exists and He exists in every object of the universe.

Now, let us discuss Christianity. In principle, there is only one God in this religion but there is one Begotten Son too and he is God too and there is the Holy Ghost, who is another God. Thus, the concept of Trinity is born. The most important belief is that one can get salvation only when one believes in Jesus, and

believes in Jesus as the Son of God and as God too, and believes in his Crucifixion as the only source of redemption for the sins of mankind. God is at once one and three. Trinity comprises the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost or the Father, the Son and the Virgin Mary.

Dr. Mohsin Usmani Nadwi says, "After discussing the concept of God, a brief explanation of the Christian belief with regard to God has already been given. However, when one goes into the details, one confronts knotty problems. For example, is each one of the three Gods like the one original God in all respects? While elucidating the concept of Trinity, the Christian scholars say that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God and yet they are not three Gods but only one. Like the Father, the Son has no beginning and one is not senior to the other."

*Mutala'-e-Mazahib (Study of Religions (Urdu), pp.128, 129)*

- Buddhism neither accepts nor rejects God. It does not accept the role of any supernatural Being (God) either in the creation of the universe or in the procreation of man.
- According to Jainism, there is no need for God in the creation of man and the universe. Jainism rejects the concept of God. Matter and Jiva have no beginning and no end. Both Buddhism and Jainism are silent on the subjects of God's existence and concept of God.

Dr. Mohsin Usmani writes about the concept of God in Sikhism: "The main personality in Sikhism is Guru. Guru Nanakji is the Founder of Sikhism. He calls Shaguna Brahman by different names like Kartar (Creator), Akal (Eternal), Satnaam (Holy Name) and

considers Him worthy of worship. In the post-Nanak literature, Wahe Guru is the phrase much used. He has used the names of God which the Puranic Bhakti has used like Ram, Gopal, Muraari and Narayan." (ibid., pp 150-151)

More details regarding God, His Personality and Attributes, and His Demands are not available.

- There is monotheism in Judaism but the religion claims that the Jews have an exclusive relationship with God. The following incident is recorded in the Bible; God engaged Jacob all night in a wrestling match (Genesis, 32:24-30)

Dr. Mohsin Usmani writes, "In Judaism there is a greater emphasis on the Jews being the chosen race than on the concept of God. The Jews are created to rule over the world and for paradise in the life to come". (ibid., pp 150-151)

- According to Islam, God alone is the Creator of man and the universe. Man and the Universe did not come into existence on their own. And there is no plethora of deities. God has been there without a beginning and His is the only Being that will live for ever and ever. He has no son, no daughter and no spouse. He has auspicious attributes. He does not require help; all need His help. According to Islam, God is not merely the Creator, the Proprietor, the Lord, and the Protector; He is also the King, the Guide, the Law-giver. The Qur'ān tells us that God granted man a Law for his whole life through the Prophets. The Qur'ān warns man never to cross the limits prescribed by God as he has to remember that he has to return to God

after death and God will reckon with him and decide whether to send him to hell or heaven. No one is associated with Him in His Person, attributes, rights and authority. To associate anyone, (be he an angel or a highly revered human being or any other identity) in any of the above-mentioned aspects of God is *Shirk* or an act of invading the exclusive prerogatives of God. This act is the deadliest of all sins. The Qur'ān says: "Those who invoke others instead of Allah, associating with Him in His Divinity, only follow conjectures and are merely guessing." (10:66) A second excerpt reads: "They have set up rivals to Allah that they may lead people astray from His Way. Tell them: "Enjoy for a while. You are doomed to end up in the Fire!" (14:30) The Qur'ān has this passage too. "Truly it is only associating others with Allah in His Divinity that Allah does not forgive, and He grants forgiveness (for) any other thing besides that to whomsoever He wills. Whoever associates others with Allah in His Divinity has strayed far away." (4:116)

**Comments:**

This survey makes it obvious that, the concept of God differs from religion to religion and is sometimes mutually contradicting and conflicting. Not only that. There are religions which subscribe to a belief in God and religions which deny His existence. There are religions which accommodate monotheism as well as polytheism. The one religion that makes no compromise on monotheism and rejects intensely and

insistently belief in any additional God is Islam. In these circumstances, will it be proper to say that all religions are true. It is obvious that only one concept of God is and ought to be true. If we accept that only one concept of God is true after a great deal of reasoning, evidence – sifting, and deep analysis, and reject the rest, then does our act imply ill-repute for other religions? It is quite true that as a matter of principle religions should not be subject to scorn and ridicule. But accepting what is logical is not scorn and what is true should be acknowledged as true. Instead, if we go on insisting that all religions should be accepted as true, then it will result in acknowledging a non-God as God and as equal to the genuine God. To acknowledge one as God when he is not God and to reject the genuine God will be an act of open rebellion against God. What will the consequence of such conduct bring – reward or punishment? One can easily understand.

**(B) Creation of the Universe**

Let us see how religions enlighten us on the important questions such as the following: How was the universe created? Does it have a Creator or not? If there is a Creator, has He gone into hiding after creating the universe? Or, has He handed it over to others? Or, is it that God the Creator is also its Care-taker and Administrator and all are under His command? What is the purpose of creating the Universe? How will it end? Will it just go on and on? There are other questions besides.

In Hinduism there are different versions about the creation and the advent of the Universe. For example, the Vedas have one version and the Upanishads,

Manusmriti and the Puranas contain other versions. The Arya Samaj has one version. These versions differ radically. Some are mentioned below:

Dr. Tara Chand in his book *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* says:

> *"In the beginning not-being and being were both non-existent, there was a dark void in which the One breathed calm and windless, then desire sprang within Him which was the bond of being and non-being and the cause of entire creation. But the account which became popular was that the primeval being created the waters on which floated the golden egg, he then entered it, and was born from it as Brahma the first of created things. Brahma then created gods, heaven, earth, sky, sun, moon, universe and man."*
>
> *(Pre-Muslim Hindu Culture, Pp. 2-3)*

What the Vedas say about the creation of the universe is as follows:

> *"The Satya (truth) and Yagna (Physical and mental/ intellectual) was born from glowing Tapa (penance). Then the Day and night were born. After that the ocean filled with water was born.*
>
> *"Samvatsar (year as the concept of time) was born from the ocean of water. Ishwar (the Supreme Parameshwar) created the Day and the night.*
>
> *"Ishwar created the Three Lokas – Surya (Sun), Chandra (Moon), Swarga (Heaven, black hole, white hole, our Earth and space exactly as before. (Rig Veda: 10:190:1-3)*

The following details are found about the creation of the universe in Devi Bhagwat Purana. Swami Dayanand Saraswati writes:

> *"Mark! It is written in the Devi Bhagvat Purana that a goddess named Shri, the mistress of Shripur, was the author of the universe. She also created Brahma,*

*Vishnu and Mahadeva. She willed and then rubbed her hands and lo! There was a blister out of which Brahma was born. The goddess asked him to marry her. Brahma replied, "Thou art my mother, therefore, it does not behove me to marry thee." This enraged the mother goddess and she reduced her son to ashes." (The Satyartha Prakash or The Light of Truth, p. 235)*

Later in this mythology Devi creates Vishnu and Mahadeva:

*"A lotus came out of the navel of Vishnu, and Brahma out of the lotus, Swayambhava out of the right big toe of Brahma's right foot and the queen Satyrupa out of his left great toe. Out of his forehead were born ten sons such as Rudra and Marichi who begot ten Prajapatis, whose thirteen daughters were married to Kashyapa. Out of these thirteen wives of Kashyapa, Diti gave birth to fiends, Danu to demons, Aditi to the sun, Vinata to birds, Kadru to snakes, Sharma to dogs, and jackals, etc., and others to elephants, horses, donkeys, buffaloes, grass, straw and trees such as acacia with thorns and all." (The Satyartha Prakash or The Light of Truth, pp. 263-64)*

Shiva Purana has the following concept of creation:

*"...it's written in the Shiva Purana - "Shiva wiled 'Let me create the world.' "Thereupon he created an expanse of water called Narayana from its navel sprang up a lotus plant, out of which issued forth Brahma who say that it was all water. He took a handful of water, looked at it and threw it back (into the ocean) which caused a bubble to rise from its surface. Out of this bubble came a man who addressed Brahma thus, "O My Son! Create the world." Brahma replied. "I am not your son, rather you are my son." "Thereupon they began to quarrel over it and continued fighting with each other on the surface of the*

*water for one thousand years of the gods."* (*The Satyartha Prakash or The Light of Truth, p. 262)*

This story is long. At the end out came a man who said, "I sent you both to create the world, why have you been quarrelling with each other." They replied, "How could we create the world without some material?" Thereupon Mahadeva took a ball of ashes out of his matted hair and gave it to them saying, "Go forth and create the world out of this ball." (*The Satyartha Prakash* or The Light of Truth, p. 263)

These different versions about the creation of the universe have been narrated in the Puranas and borrowed from *Satyarth Prakash*. There is no commonly agreed upon version on this subject in Hinduism.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati says in his book *Satyarth Prakash* that the details given in the Puranas with regard to the creation of the universe are wrong. (*Satyarth Prakash*, chap. 11, p.294)

The subject of the creation of the universe does not find a mention in Buddhism. Edward Conze writes in *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*:

*"Buddhist tradition does not exactly deny the existence of a creator, but it is not really interested to know who created the Universe. The purpose of Buddhist doctrine is to release beings from suffering, and speculations concerning the origin of the Universe are held to be immaterial to that task. They are not merely a waste of time but they may also postpone deliverance from suffering by engendering ill-will in oneself and in others. Thus the Buddhists adopt an attitude of agnosticism to the question of a personal creator.... If indifference to a personal creator of the Universe is Atheism, then Buddhism is indeed atheistic."*

*(Buddhism: Its Essence and Development, Edward Conze, p. 39)*

As Jainism rejects the concept of God, it gives a materialistic interpretation of the creation of the universe. The following passage is worthy of consideration:

*"In short, all the things of the world and all happenings and situations that take place in the world, whether good or bad, are formed according to the rag dwesh (passions and desires or relationships) of jiv (soul) and to the kind and essence of the thing. There is no need of any interference of Paramatama therein." (Jain Dharma aur Paramatama, p. 36)*

Another extract from the same book:

*"What is the world, after all? Jiv (soul), which is involved in reincarnation, takes birth and dies; sometimes it goes to the hell; sometimes takes birth as inorganic and botanical things, sometimes as a human or god; sometimes happy, sometimes sad.... This is the world and everyone makes his world according to his passions and desires. Thus the very cause of the world is soul itself." (Jain Dharma aur Paramatama, p. 37)*

Christianity offers the following passage from the Old Testament regarding the subject under discussion.

*"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light, And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.*

*And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first Day." (Genesis, 1:1-5)*

*(And from the second day to the sixth day, details of creation are given)*
*"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.*
*And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made." (ibid., 2:1-2).*
*In Exodus, there is this statement:*
*"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day." (20:11)*

There is this opinion about God that God became tired after the creation of the universe and took rest on the seventh day.

Islam has a clear concept about the creation of the universe. The Qur'ān contains the details. According to Islam, the universe, the Soul and Matter do not have eternal life. The researches of science corroborate this view.

According to Islam, Allah alone is the Creator of the universe. To create the universe, He did not stand in need of Matter and Soul. Allah began the creation of life with water. In this process of the creation of the universe no one lent his hand and help to Allah. In the Qur'ān, it is stated, when Allah is the Creator of the universe, what have the others who are being worshipped beside Allah created? It is not possible for anyone to create even a fly? The Qur'ān narrates:

*"O People, a parable is set forth: pay heed to it. Those who call upon aught other than Allah shall never be able to create even a fly, even if all of them were to come together to do that. And if the fly were to snatch away anything from them, they would not be able to recover it from it." (22:73)*

God did not grow weary, during the process of the creation of the universe, to the extent of requiring relief and relaxation. He is free from such frailties, as He is sans beginning, sans end.

After completing the task of creation, Allah has not handed it over to anyone else. He alone rules over His creation. All subsist and survive and function under the regulations prescribed by Him for them.

**Review:**

What concepts different religions have advanced as regards the creation of the universe have been summed up in the preceding paragraphs. To seek Unity in them is not possible as the element of contradiction is prominent in them. Two religions do not even postulate the existence of God, as according to them, there is no role for God in the stupendous task of the creation of the universe. According to two other religions, God did create the universe but the job exhausted Him and He took rest on the seventh day. One religion offers strange stories but their intellectual proofs and scientific explanations are hard to come by. One religion lays stress on the belief in one God who is great as the Creator, the Owner, the Protector, the Ruler, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful, the Planner and the Administrator. This concept represents God as One endowed with the finest and divine attributes. In addition, the guidance given on the subject of the creation of the universe is in sync with scientific facts. This concept is intellectually satisfying too.

Should we treat all these concepts as equally valid and true in one stride? Should we accept all of them or

accept that which appears to be true in the light o intellect, evidence, Nature and cosmic phenomenon.

**C. Guidance of Mankind and System of Instruction**

Compared to other creatures, man is in greater need of guidance and instruction in his life, and compared to other needs like bread, clothes, house, education, and medical treatment too. Man should know the purpose of life in whose fulfilment he should spend his life. To secure God's pleasure and appreciation and to follow the path of His choice, man requires instruction and he should know how to obey God's orders in different areas of life.

The question is, how is guidance secured for successful living? It can never be presumed that God has made no arrangements whatsoever for man's instruction. Mercy and justice are God's attributes which warrant that He should take upon Himself the duty of providing excellent arrangements for man to follow the path of righteousness.

Now, let us see what religions have to say about God's guidance provided to man.

- Buddhism does not anticipate the need for supernatural source of instruction for mankind. Instead of a comprehensive code of guidance, man has to do with a few moral precepts. The concept of a detailed and holistic guidance and a system of life is not well-pronounced. Monasticism is presented as an ideal way of living. Indifference to God and His guidance has created a vacuum which is filled by devotion to and worship of Gautama Buddha.

- Swami Mahavira of Jainism does not believe in securing man's guidance through a supernatural source. Jainism clearly rejects God. However, there are high moral precepts in this religion. Monastic life is idealised. There is no formula for comprehensive guidance and a system of life in Jainism (in the same way as in Buddhism).

Both Buddhism and Jainism do not acknowledge he need for God, and prophets, and Revelation for nan's guidance and salvation. Following the teachings of Gautama Buddha and Mahavira is considered sufficient for salvation. Worshipping these great founders, instead of God, is much in vogue.

- Though the primary sources for Hinduism are the four Vedas, other sources like the Gita, Mahabharata, the Upanishads, the Puranas, etc., are also acknowledged. In this religion, concepts like a Nabi, a Messenger or Revelation are not found. The Vedas do not have the concept of *avatara*. But the Gita and other Books refer to it. It is believed that God takes the initiative to guide mankind, to eliminate oppression and to reform the society and for these purposes assumes human or other forms and comes down to the earth. Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Parasurama, etc., have been accepted as the *avataras* of Lord Vishnu. Sri Narasimhan (half-man and half-lion), Kurma Avatara (tortoise), Matsya Avatara (fish) are some other *avataras*. Eminent thinkers and leaders of Hinduism like S. Radhakrishnan, Swami Vivekananda and Pandit Vedaprakash

Upadhyay, *et al* agree that the concept o *avatara* is not found in the Vedas. In addition *avatara* does not mean that God assume human or some other form and descends to the earth. Instead, *avatara* just means 'That which has been sent down.' That may mean: God appoints a human being as His own representative in order to reform individuals, remove oppression and injustice, and eliminate decadence and anarchy. This interpretation of '*avatara*' is closer to the concept of Prophethood.

- Islamic viewpoint on this subject is as follows:

The system of Prophethood is the medium through which God has arranged to guide mankind. There are three important factors given below in this system.

1. Man needs God for guidance because God has created him and knows him through and through.
2. The men of impeccable character and dignity selected by God to guide people are known as Prophets. After all, man alone can be a practical model for other men. God's message reaches a prophet through a process known as "*wahi*". This message comprises guidance and instructions. What the prophets say is full of certainty, authority and decisiveness because their statements are based on genuine knowledge vouchsafed to them by God, are not corrupted by conjectures, surmises, personal predilections and proclivities. Consequently, their statements are based on truth and rise above doubt and suspicion. Precisely because of

this quality of their statements, it was incumbent upon their respective communities to believe in and obey them. To reject them was tantamount to rejecting God who sent them. Obedience and loyalty to a Prophet did not differ from obedience and loyalty to God. Likewise disobeying a prophet is in essence disobeying God.

3. Even though every man is endowed with the capacity to discriminate between good and evil, virtue and vice, this capacity does not suffice an individual who has some authority, freedom, intellect and consciousness. That is why God established a long chain of warners and Prophets and Prophet Muhammad (Allah's blessings and peace be unto him) is the Last link of that chain.
4. *Nabis* and Prophets had appeared in different nations and during different periods. The last of them to appear is Hazrat Muhammad (Sal). It is necessary to believe in him for one's own guidance, success and salvation, because the teachings of the preceding prophets and the Books they brought have been subjected to such interpolations that it is impossible to reclaim the kernel of their teachings.

Prophet Muhammad's teachings, conduct and character, biographical elements and mission are all recorded and preserved in history. He made it clear that he was not claiming credit for innovation and originality. Instead, he claimed that he was presenting in the capacity of the last Prophet what the preceding prophets and messengers conveyed as the divine

message of God to their respective communities, but he was doing so in a comprehensive and perfect manner and to all human beings.

**Summing up:**

A brief survey of the divine arrangement that has been made for the guidance of mankind brings out the following features:

1. Some religions are not convinced that God, Prophet and Revelation are necessary for guidance. Instead core moral teachings suffice. In general, celibate and monastic life is looked upon as an ideal way to live. A practical map of a perfect way of life is not available. Instructions to solve modern challenges of life are hard to come by. Aspiration for salvation is dependent on the act of upholding lofty moral precepts, celibacy and monasticism. These constitute the total asset for purposes of life's regulation.
2. Some religions accept that God, Prophet and Revelation are necessary. However, when we study the religions in depth, radical and fundamental differences emerge. For example, in one religion (i.e., Christianity) all Prophets from Adam to John the Baptist are acknowledged as Prophets whereas Jesus Christ is made a part of the Trinity and belief in the last Prophet (who is the last link in the chain of the Prophets) is rejected, and the Book (the Qur'ān) revealed to him is rejected too.

   According to Christianity, Jesus Christ is the only Begotten Son of God and one God of the

Trinity. (According to Islam), all Prophets from Adam (unto him be peace) to Hazrat Muhammad (unto him be Allah's blessings and peace) preached monotheism and forbade *shirk* (the act of invading God's exclusive rights and status).

3. According to one religion (Islam), the arrangement that God has made with regard to man's guidance and enlightenment is nothing but what God's attributes – mercy, and justice and wisdom – warranted. That's why, from the beginning of human history, to guide Adam (unto him be peace) and his progeny, God had been constantly sending Prophets and Messengers, according to this religion. It is imperative in Islam to believe in all prophets, including the last Prophet. Similarly, the Books and Scriptures should also be subscribed to as they were given to them by God. The Books and the Laws given to the preceding Prophets have now been superseded. Guidance, prosperity and salvation are now possible only through allegiance to Prophet Muhammad (sal), and to the holy Qur'ān as a Book of guidance, and by following their teachings.

The survey makes it clear that there is no convergence of opinion among the religions about the important issue of man's guidance. This difference is of an essential and fundamental nature. After such a difference, how can one assert that all religions are equally true? Only one religion among them can be true for it should be in accordance with the evidence furnished by the semiotics of intellect, nature, man and

universe. It is the responsibility of every individual t look out for and investigate into the religion of trut and to embrace it when it is found, if he is indeed quit desirous of worldly success and avoiding hell-fire i the hereafter.

**D: The Concept of Life after Death:**

While considering the teachings of religion pertaining to the basic issues of life, one importan issue – life after death – confronts us. Is there any life after death? If there is, what shape will success anc salvation assume there? If there is no life, then wha will happen? This is not just a philosophical question. It has a direct bearing on man's moral and practical life and on his conduct and behaviour.

Worldly life is the be-all and end-all of some, and they think death is the complete end of life. There is nothing but vacuum after death. This is merely an unsubstantiated assertion. Some others are of the opinion that the comforts and luxuries they enjoy in this world will accompany them in the next world, if there is one. There are some other views too. What we have to see now is to find out the views of different religions on life after death and to find out which view is to be accepted as true and on what basis.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism share the belief in the cycle of rebirths among them. The difficulty in accepting the Hindu viewpoint lies in the fact that the Vedas do not mention this belief. Instead, they speak of the vetting of human deeds and of heaven and hell. They speak of *Pitr Lok* which may mean *Alam-e-Barzakh* (the world between death and Resurrection). Details of heaven and hell are found in

them. But the Gita and the Puranas talk of *Karma* and Rebirths. Deeds determine the nature of rebirth in this world.

In the new birth, man can assume human, animal and botanical forms. *Karma* is crucial to this transformation. The series of births and deaths may continue until one undergoes changes in physical form 84 lakh times. Then only one gets salvation. There is no consensus with regard to the nature of salvation and how it will be secured.

Christianity does have the concept of life after death. In order to secure prosperity and salvation, one has to believe compulsorily in this world that Jesus Christ is the only Begotten Son of God and that he was crucified. Obeying the law is not compulsory; belief in Jesus Christ supersedes it. The concept of heaven and hell is also found.

There are clear teachings on this subject in Islam. In fact, this is the third basic concept of Islam – belief in the hereafter (*Aakhirah*). According to this belief, man is answerable to God with regard to his worldly life. Heaven will be the reward for faith and good deeds. Wrong beliefs and evil deeds will lead to punishment and chastisement in hell. Intercession and friendship will be of no avail. God's justice will be impartial. On the Day of Resurrection, all human beings will appear before Allah the Exalted to get their respective wages.

The Qur'ān says:

*"Surely He will gather you all together on the Day* of *Resurrection the coming of which is beyond doubt; but those who have courted their own ruin are not going to believe." (6:12)*

*"Those who consider it a lie that they will have to meet Allah are indeed the losers so much so that when that Hour comes to them suddenly, they will say: 'Alas for us, how negligent we have been in this behalf!' They will carry their burden (of sins) on their backs. How evil is the burden they bear! The life of this world is nothing but a sport and a pastime, and the life of the Hereafter is far better for those who seek to ward off their ruin. Will you, then, not understand?" (6:31,32)*

*On the resurrection of the dead, the Qur'ān says, "And of His Signs is that you see the earth withered, then we send down water upon it, and lo! it quivers and swells. Surely He who gives life to the dead earth will also give life to the dead. Surely He has power over everything." (41:39)*

What will happen in the Hereafter? The Qur'ān throws light on it in detail. At one place, it says:

*"Fear the Day when no one shall avail another, when no intercession will be accepted, when no one will be ransomed, and no criminal will receive any help." (2:48)*

*"On the Day of Resurrection neither your blood-kindred nor your own offspring will avail you. (On that Day) He will separate you. Allah sees all that you do." (60:3)*

*"On that Day when each man shall flee from his brother, and his mother and his father, and his consort and his children; on that Day each will be occupied with his own business, making him oblivious of all save himself." (80:34-37)*

**Revaluation:**

Following conclusions can be drawn from the stocktaking of the teachings of different religions on the subject of life after death:

1) Basic teachings of religions contain deep differences and prominent variety. There is no consensus.
2) All these concepts cannot be correct and valid. Research is needed to determine which concept is true.
3) So many things like belief, the direction of one's practical life, conduct and behaviour, transactions, fulfilment of the rights of God and other human beings and eagerness for it depend on the acceptance and rejection of these concepts. Under the influence of different concepts, different social and ethical models emerge.

In addition to the afore-mentioned basic concepts, there are other issues too in which different religions differ radically. Some issues are listed below.

- The goal of human existence
- Patterns of different acts of worship and service
- Egalitarianism

After becoming familiar with these differences that religions have, it is difficult to assert that embracing any religion is a right and incontrovertible step. By living up to the precepts of any religion, man can secure God's pleasure. What we have to determine is: which one of these concepts is God-given and the adoption of which will ensure His pleasure? It is every man's responsibility to put some effort and investigate to find the answer by making use of knowledge and

proof and intellect and insight. The result of such a research will be in his possession. It is possible that adopting man-made or group-made concepts may be generally understood as following some religion but one has to ponder whether such an act is not really an act of disobedience to God. With such insobriety in thinking, how can man attain peace, tranquillity, relaxation, progress and prosperity in this world and success and salvation in the world to come?

*hapter III*

# An Important Aspect of the Unity of Religions

It is necessary to look at the issue of the Unity of eligions from one more angle. One important fact merges from the scriptures and it is that the sun, the noon, the earth, the sky, air, water, flora and fauna ave been pressed into service for the benefit of man. he blessings are not to be monopolised by a special roup or nation or country but are to be used by all. his is clearly witnessed. All human beings, whether hey are in a minority or a majority, belonging to any ace or colour, speaking any language, living in any lace, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, are taking dvantage of these blessings because they are ndispensable for human survival and development. It s as though God granted to all without excluding nyone these material and physical necessities. If He ad deprived any one of these blessings, the privation would have been a contravention of His justice, mercy, nd wisdom. He did not allow any privation to occur.

Now, let us think further. Man does not merely ave material and physical necessities. His spiritual nd ethical life is much more important, and stands in need of guidance and instructions (religion). Is it possible for God to favour one special group or race with a religion and keep the rest of humanity deprived of it? Such a possibility never exists; and if it exists, it

will amount to an act of gross injustice. God i unquestionably just to all; He is not one whit unjust t anyone. So, it has to be accepted that whatever religio He has bestowed for man's guidance, He has bestowe it not on one group, or nation, or race or country but o all human beings. Just as one group or race cannc claim the right of monopoly on His blessing mentioned above, in the same way no one can clain monopoly on His guidance too.

It is not possible to enumerate the blessings tha Allah has vouchsafed to us. Men derive innumerable benefits from them. God's guidance has infinite advantages for him who embraces it and protects him from every loss, evil and corruption. Of all His blessings, His guidance (religion) is the greatest and most precious for His servants, acceptance of which brings in its wake peace, security, rest and tranquillity, growth and progress. Man becomes safe from insecurity and anarchy.

Where is this guidance of God now? With whom is it available? Whoever has it cannot claim it to be his personal property. Instead, it should be held in trust to be shared with mankind. Those who have this blessing are duty-bound to value it from the core of their hearts and they will gain a great deal by following it. At the same time, they should introduce it to others and popularise it. They are not its owners and they have no monopoly of it. They are its custodians only. As they have it in their possession today, indifference to it (and not communicating it to others) will put them in the dock in the Hereafter.

Where is this guidance of God now? First of all, it should be seen whether, among all religions, there is a

religion which claims that it is the only religion from God and is meant for all humanity, and whether the official Book or Books of this religion contain instructions and guidance in support of the said claim. Is the message of that religion universal, cosmic and fundamental in nature? Are those characteristics which have been mentioned earlier in these pages as the hallmark of a true religion found in this religion?

The second important question is whether this religion has ever been ascribed to any human being in history, or whether this religion had always claimed that it is from God alone. Another additional question is whether the presenter or presenters of this religion presented it as one founded by him/them, or whether the presenter always claimed to the contrary that he was presenting it not on his behalf but on behalf of God. Moreover, what kind of people were the presenters? Were they truthful, God-fearing and morally upright? Were they committed to the welfare, happiness and prosperity of the people? Or did they have some axe to grind when they championed the cause of this religion? Did they categorically say, "We wish you well. We do not seek any reward or compensation from you. We convey this religion and its precepts to you for your success and salvation under orders from God. For proof thereof, see our utter self-abnegation and our complete sincerity and honesty. Before inviting you to follow this religion, we scrupulously follow it ourselves. We expect our wages from our God (Employer). Neither accept nor reject this religion blindly. Think deeply and dispassionately and take an independent and voluntary decision for your own success and salvation."

Today the crop of complex problems and distorted social conditions point out the failure of all man-made religions and ideologies. Man is caught in an enormous crisis. His life is ruined. The only solution for his problems lies in the divine prescription or formula. Instead of opting for one more new religion or formulating a new ideology, it is preferable for man to look for God's true religion and admit it in his own life. Only then the crisis will end. After leading a success life here, he will secure salvation (God's approval and appreciation) in the hereafter and avoid chastisement in hell.

### i. The Qur'ānic Guidance

On the subject of the Unity of religions, the Qur'ānic viewpoint has an importance of its own and deserves serious consideration.

Nearly 1450 years ago, the Qur'ān was sent down to Hazrat Muhammad (Allah's blessings and peace be unto him). He has not authored it. From the beginning of its revelation to its conclusion, the Qur'ān has always maintained that Allah has sent it down to him. (56:80) There is this challenge to those who refuse to acknowledge it as the word of God and as a scripture to produce a small chapter comparable to that of the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān makes a special statement that the scriptures sent down to the prophets earlier have not retained their textual purity. The followers of those Books added man-made interpretations to them and removed some passages and added some others. Consequently, to identify God's original passages in them is difficult. However, the Qur'ān has been well-

reserved, has preserved the gist of the genuine achings of the preceding scriptures, and functions as criterion to assess them. Therefore, the preceding criptures are believed in but practical guidance will ot be sought from them. For that purpose the Qur'ān as the sole prerogative.

The following guidelines from the Qur'ān deserve erious consideration when it comes to the question of religion for mankind.

1. The true religion with Allah is Islam. (3:19)
2. Do they now seek a religion other than that prescribed by Allah and this despite all that in the heavens and the earth is in submission to Him – willingly or unwillingly – and to Him all shall return. (3:83)
3. And whoever seeks a way other than this way of submission – Islam – will find that it will not be accepted from him and he will be among the losers in the life to come. (3:85)
4. This day I have perfected for you your religion, and have bestowed upon you My Bounty in full measure and have been pleased to assign for you Islam as your religion. (5:3)

One comes to know from the perceptive remarks of the Qur'ān and Hazrat Muhammad (unto him be Allah's blessings and peace) that Islam is the Deen (religion) vouchsafed to people by Allah. No man, no Messenger or no *Nabi* is its founder. Let there be no wrong assumption here that Islam originated in Arabia about 1450 years ago when Hazrat Muhammad (unto him be Allah's blessings and peace) claimed to be a prophet or, that he is the founder of Islam. In fact, this religion was granted to Hazrat Adam (unto him be

peace) and his progeny. The most holistic, comple and definitive form of the religion was granted Prophet Muhammad (unto him be Allah's blessin and peace).

Islam is a bisemic word. It means peace ar security and it also means submission to God's wil One who submits totally to Allah is described as Muslim. Islam has no race and no nationality.

Any behaviour in contravention of Islam is know as *Kufr* and *Shirk*. References to the latter in th Qur'ān have already been mentioned. With regard t *Kufr*, the following Qur'ānic statements deserv consideration:

> *"Truly those who embraced unbelief and died as un believers, not even the whole earth full of gold will b accepted from them as ransom. For such there i painful chastisement, and none shall come to thei help." (3:91)*
>
> *"Worldly life has been made attractive to those wh have denied the Truth. Such men deride the men o faith, but the pious shall rank, higher than them on th Day of Resurrection. As for worldly livelihood, Alla grants it to whomsoever He wills without measure.' (2:212)*

**ii. How did some religions come into being?**

Some religions are named after some historical personalities, e.g. Buddhism and Jainism. Buddhism is named after Mahatma Gautama Buddha; Jainism takes the name after Mahavira. Mahavira is considered to be the actual founder of the religion. He bears the title Jina – this means winner, from which the name of the religion is derived. – Astrid Rosenschon, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p.107.

These religions have been in existence for more an 2500 years now. And we are not in a position to certain what the Founders' genuine mission was and hat their authentic precepts were. Did these two ninent personalities really propound that there was ) Creator for man and the Universe and that the reator made no arrangement for man's guidance? We itness this phenomenon that after expressing difference to the concept of God, the followers of autama Buddha and Mahavir Jain have accorded the atus of God to their respective leaders to all intents ıd purposes. Their statues and portraits are 'orshipped. Prayers are offered to them and they are :lied upon to fulfil the wishes of the devotees.

One has to take into consideration this point too. 'hese two religions have been in existence for more ıan 2500 years old. What guidance did people who .ved before these religions became operational have? Vhich religion did they follow? Although there is a laim in Jainism that there are twenty-four *irthankaras* and that it is the oldest and first religion ıf mankind, there is no irrefutable proof for it.

Historically speaking, Gautama Buddha and Mahavir Jain were human beings. One can find in their ives all conditions that human beings undergo like :ating, drinking, sleeping, waking, health and illness, ınd death. How can they be deified then? These two great personalities did not claim to possess godhead ınd did not demand that they should be offered *pooja* ɔr that supplications should be made to them.

Now let us see how Christianity made its advent. The basic tenets of Christianity have already been mentioned. Does the Bible have the concept of

Christianity along with these tenets? The answer is in the negative. It is well-known that about seventy or a hundred years after Jesus Christ, Saint Paul laid the foundation for modern Christianity and ascribed it to Jesus Christ. According to the Bible, Jesus himself worshipped one God. He did not propose the concept of Trinity. (St. Mark 12:29) The Nicea Council was convened in 325 C.E. under the chairmanship of Emperor Constantine. The Christian scholars adopted the doctrine that Jesus was the only Begotten Son of God or God Himself as an official doctrine in that council. Before it, there was no consensus on such a doctrine.

In the same way, Prophet Moses (unto him be peace) is associated with Judaism. However, he does not appear to be a founder of a new religion in the Bible. Instead, he invites people to worship one God and to follow His commandments. After his departure, his followers founded a religion and ascribed it to him. Now it is known as Judaism.

**iii. The Ultimate Verdict is in human hands:**

According to the Qur'ān, the religion acceptable to God is Islam alone. He has not given too many religions to man; He has not said that He will be pleased if people followed any religion of their choice. How some religions have come into existence or been invented has already been described. Worldly success, prayers, prosperity and salvation can be secured only through a religion officially sanctioned and approved by God. However, no man can be compelled to accept it. Inducement and coercion should not be used as

ıstruments for conversion. Clear instructions in this ɐgard are found in the Qur'ān.

1. "There is no compulsion in religion. The Right Way stands clearly distinguished from the wrong." (2:256)
2. "And proclaim": This is the Truth from your Lord. Now let him who will, believe; and let him who will, disbelieve." (18:29)
3. "Surely We (God) showed him the Right Path, regardless of whether he chooses to be thankful or unthankful (to Us)." (76:3)

These statements make it explicit that the Qur'ān projects Islam as God's own religion. But every man has full authority and freedom to accept or reject it and no one is empowered to deprive man of it. At the same time, it is made clear that Allah will not accept any other religion than Islam. The result of following any religion other than Islam will be a loss of guidance, insecurity, decadence, anarchy, oppression, torture. In the life to come, there will be a tremendous failure and hell-fire to endure.

These details lead to some questions:

What does Islam instruct about the followers of other religions?

Does it regard other religions as competitive and contending rivals and their followers as foes?

Does it deprive them of freedom in the matters of life, belief and action? Or, does it guarantee the protection of fundamental rights of man and freedom of belief and action? In the pages to follow some details are given.

**iv. One Significant Reality:**

The discussion so far has made it clear that in the beginning men were granted only one religion by God through prophets and messengers and that religion was actively followed. Later on, differences were created owing to various reasons and people founded different religions.

The Qur'ān throws light on such a development.

*"In the beginning mankind followed one single way. (Later on this state ended and differences arose.) Then Allah sent forth Prophets as heralds of good tidings for the righteous and as Warners against the consequences of evil-doing. He sent down with them the Book – embodying the Truth so that it might judge among people in their disputes. And those who innovated divergent ways rather than follow the Truth were none other than those who had received the knowledge of the Truth and clear guidance; and they did so to commit excesses against each other. So, by His leave, Allah directed the believers to the Right Way in matters in which they disagreed. Allah guides whomsoever He wills into the Straight Way". (2:213)*

**v. The Responsibility of Muslims:**

Islam is the divinely gifted religion for the whole of humanity. The Noble Qur'ān and Prophet Muhammad (unto him be Allah's blessings and peace) have been sent and meant for all people. The first Prophet of Islam is Hazrat Adam (unto him be peace) and the last Prophet is Hazrat Muhammad (unto him be Allah's blessings and peace). The Book which was revealed to him, i.e., The Qur'ān, and the holy ministry of the Prophet are well-preserved. Allah Himself has described him as His Last Prophet. The Prophet (sal)

established an ideal society on the basis of Islam and he details of such a society are historically recorded.

It is obligatory upon all Muslims to keep their hearts and minds fully committed towards Islam and to be sincerely grateful to Allah for this blessing. They have to assess their enviable position that this blessing (Islam) is in their possession only in this wide world. But it is a trust which they have to pass on, individually and collectively, as soon as possible, through word and deed and social behaviour, to all human beings in general and to our countrymen in particular.

Then the natural corollary of this strong belief is to make the propagation of the message of Islam by all means, physical, spiritual and financial, at your disposal one's life's mission. Just to ingratiate oneself with people at large, one should not declare that all religions are equally true.

Man-made ideologies, philosophies and religions have so far neither ensured human welfare nor solved any problem. Instead the problems became more complicated. Mankind is still wrestling with the evil consequences and destructive results of the two world-dominating ideologies – capitalism and communism.

***Chapter IV***

# Interfaith Dialogue

Nowadays programmes under the rubric of "Interfaith Dialogue" are being held in order to foster mutual understanding between peoples sincerely committed to the cause of religion and to familiarise each other with their respective positions accurately on this issue. Another rubric is Inter-Religious Programme. Such programmes are indispensable to foster peaceful life, fraternal feelings, peace and amity.

In our opinion, the following ought to be the objectives of the Interfaith Dialogue:

1. Followers of different religions should close their ranks. They should eliminate mutual misunderstandings. Open-mindedness should bridge the gulf.
2. Common values among different religions should be pointed out, as they would provide the foundations for peaceful co-existence of the followers of different religions. Feelings of brotherliness and mutual trust should create an ambience of peace and tranquillity.
3. Religions should be accepted and known as they are. In this process of assessment, prejudice and narrow-mindedness should not become hurdles.
4. The most important and basic purpose of this Dialogue should be to make a search for that guidance which God gave at the very beginning

of human history. This guidance from God reached humanity through a succession of Prophets which began with Hazrat Adam (unto him be peace) and ended with the last Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Allah's blessings and peace be unto him). It is the responsibility of every individual to try to find out what message, instruction and guidance these Prophets conveyed to mankind. Human welfare and salvation are dependent on this attempt. Even though the personalities of the Prophets and the Books revealed to them have not remained safe and reliable, the biography and the Book revealed to Prophet Muhammad (sal) enjoy historical authenticity.

5. One objective of the Dialogue should be to introduce Islam correctly and, while doing so, misunderstandings and prejudices about Islam should also be eliminated.
6. Among other objectives of the Dialogue are included the following: realisation of the above in national life, elimination of unwarranted hatred and enmity in the name of religion, protection of religious groups from cultural aggression. In a pluralistic society, peace and progress can be guaranteed only if followers of different religions and upholders of different cultures keep fraternal feelings and human rights vibrant.

It is being indirectly said that religion is the real cause for the disruption of peace, war-mongering, violence, terrorism, and blatant violation of human rights. Quite the contrary. The factors responsible for

the deplorable and critical conditions of our countr and the world, and for the emergence of terrorism i particular should be sought elsewhere. As long a those causes are not addressed, there is no possibilit of the situation changing for the better.

Another regrettable aspect is that, in thes programmes, among both the speakers and th listeners, there isn't any eagerness for or interest in th attempt to find out the guidance granted by God, an to apply the mind and decide to opt for it.

One has to bestow thoughts on the fact that th world has not succeeded in securing peace and justice through man-made religions and ideologies. Does Goc have a grudge against His own servants? Has He no granted them guidance and a set of instructions to secure main objectives and precious values? Does God want that man, His most distinguished creation, should spend his life in atrocious conditions like oppression and injustice, violence, assassinations, destruction, anarchy and warfare in the world which He has so intelligently designed? This just cannot be. God definitely desires that His servants should lead a life of enjoyment, and that His world should be an Elysium of prosperity, peace, progress, justice and equity. With this end in view, whatever principles and regulations He has granted, men cannot but abide by them in order to taste success in life.

The role of Muslim intellectuals and religious leaders in these programmes has a significance of its own. They must take advantage of these occasions to introduce Islam to them. Islam should be projected as a religion revealed by God and not as a racial or national religion of Muslims, and projected more as a religion

eant for all. The aspect that it is a source of osperity and salvation for each individual should be ade abundantly clear.

**eligious Tolerance**

Those who espouse the cause of the oneness of all ligions think that it is a prerequisite for religious lerance to sincerely acknowledge that all religions re true. They are of the opinion that to accept one ligion as true and to dismiss other religions as not adequately) true is in essence an intolerant behaviour tally militating against religious tolerance.

This interpretation of religious tolerance is fallible. is not tolerance to acknowledge one religion to be ue merely to please others and to avoid offending the llowers of that religion when a man's intelligence, gic, wisdom and insight have reservations about that eligion. In the same manner, one should not refrain rom presenting a religion as a true religion in spite of eing personally convinced of its truth, fearing such a resentation will only stir up a real hornets' nest. Such posture will keep truth on a par with falsehood, and vrong with right. This kind of parity cannot be ustified as a proper and just behaviour on any account. This behaviour is totally devoid of any motivation for search for truth and for embracing the truth in order o achieve success and salvation.

Tolerance should actually mean that one should ear with other religions in spite of looking askance at hem and in spite of clinging to one's religion convinced of its truth. However, one shouldn't hurt the eligious sentiments of others. One should respect the eligious icons and sacred temples of others. One

should discuss and debate with others on the strengt of reasoning in order that truth should become cryst clear. At the same time, one should not pick quarrel with the followers of other religions on the basis c one's claim that one's religion alone is true.

Tolerance should also mean that tools lik minatory gestures, intimidation, coercion, inducement should not be used in the noble task of propagatin one's religion. No unfair campaign to fan the flames o hatred should be launched against human beings. Th basic right of every individual to voluntarily embrac and follow any belief-system and religion of his choic should be earnestly accepted and he should be grante that power and freedom to choose. This right is God given and it should not be confiscated under an pretext. No one has the authority to confiscate it.

If this definition of tolerance is accepted and give credence to by followers of different religions, it i hoped that tension and antipathy among religiou groups and forces of cultural aggression will b eliminated. We see that some clever people whip u religious animosity between religious groups with al the force at their command and divide the society or religious lines to secure electoral victory and politica power. Generally, this strategy is well-known tc people who dislike it intensely because people at large prefer peaceful co-existence characterised by mutual trust and affection, and fraternal feelings.

Moulana Syed Abul A'ala Maudoodi (Allah's mercy be to him) elucidates the Islamic concept of tolerance in these words:

*"More often than not, people assume wrongly that tolerance implies that different and mutually*

*contradictory ideas of ten different people holding different ideas should be treated as equally valid and true. It is not realised that this is not tolerance really; this is hypocrisy, pure and simple. Tolerance actually means tolerating assumptions and activities of people which are improper according to our lights. Considering their sensibilities, we should refrain from that type of criticism which is likely to hurt them. Moreover, there should be no element of coercion either in turning them away from their pet assumptions or in obstructing their activities. By resorting to this kind of restraint and by adopting this method, we have to extend to them freedom of thought and action. It is not only a laudable effort but also an imperative obligation to maintain peace and amity among people of diverse persuasions. If we hold one belief and then corroborate divergent beliefs in order to keep holders of such beliefs in good humour, and if we cling to one constitution, and then tell the followers of other different constitutions that they are all on the right track, we are being hypocritical. How can such connivance be described as tolerance? After all, there should be some distinction between maintaining discreet silence and telling a deliberate lie. Genuine tolerance is that which Islam has taught us. We have been told, "Do not revile those other than Allah whom they invoke, because they will revile Allah in ignorance and out of spite. For We have indeed made the deeds of every people seem fair to them. Thereafter, they will return to their Lord and He will inform them of what they have done". (The Qur'ān, 6:108)*

This version of tolerance is what comes naturally to a devotee of truth, veracity and fair-mindedness. He will remain steadfastly loyal to the school of thinking which, in his opinion, is unquestionably right, he will spell out his belief aloud in clear terms, he will invite

others to embrace it, but he will never hurt others sentiments, he will not resort to verbal abuse o anyone, he will not be iconoclastic towards the sacre beliefs of others, he will not create obstacles in th performance of liturgies and rituals of others, and h will not employ force and intimidation to bring other round to his own orthodoxy. It is not the behaviour o an upright person to avoid describing truth as truth knowingly or to describe falsehood as truth afte recognising falsehood as falsehood and, if such behaviour is justified on the grounds that it will please others, it will be fulsome flattery of the worst kind. It will be an ethically degraded act of flattery and it will not serve the purpose for which man degrades himself." (*Tafheemat*, Vol I pp. 114-117)

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